



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on the strategy for the evolution of the Customs Union¹

*2866th ECONOMIC and FINANCIAL AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 14 May 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING the crucial role played by the Customs Union since 1968 as a foundation of the European Union;

RECALLING the objectives set by the Lisbon Strategy, as relaunched by the European Council of 22 and 23 March 2005, for the Union "to renew the basis of its competitiveness, increase its growth potential and its productivity and strengthen social cohesion, placing the main emphasis on knowledge, innovation and the optimisation of human capital";

RECALLING the recent adoption of the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a modernized customs code² and of the Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a paperless environment for customs and trade³, which are major steps taken by the Union in view of meeting the above objectives;

¹ DK: parliamentary scrutiny reservation.

² Not yet published.

³ OJ L 23 of 26.1.2008, p. 28

P R E S S

RECALLING the Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an action programme for customs in the Community (Customs 2013)⁴;

RECALLING that the Council, at its meeting on 4 December 2006, recognised the central role of customs in making progress towards establishing Single Window/One Stop Shop services, bringing together administrations involved in import and export of goods;⁵

RECALLING the Council Resolution of 30 May 2001 concerning a strategy for the Customs Union⁶ and the Council Resolution of 2 October 2003 on a strategy for customs cooperation⁷;

1. UNDERLINES that customs authorities of the European Community, being the principal authority with an overview of the import and export of goods and the international supply chain, in a context of rapid increase of trade, should maintain a permanent balance between safety and security concerns and the protection of society and of the financial interests of the European Community and of the Member States, on the one hand, and the facilitation of legitimate trade and the enhancement of the competitiveness of the European economy, on the other;
2. WELCOMES the Commission Communication⁸ entitled "Strategy for the evolution of the Customs Union", and ENDORSES in particular:
 - the role of customs, with regard to the trade, financial, fiscal, safety and security interests of the Union; and
 - the common strategic objectives;
3. CONSIDERS that to achieve such objectives, customs authorities should have a sufficient level of investment in skills, competences, resources and technologies;
4. STRESSES that customs should focus on:
 - increasing competitiveness, by facilitating legitimate trade, in particular by further developing Single Window services and new control methods (system-based approach);
 - the enhancement of safety and security, notably regarding the fight against counterfeiting and piracy, and the capacity to rapidly react to crises, as well as the protection of the financial interests of the European Community and Member States and the fight against fraud;
 - the enhancement of cooperation with economic operators, other governmental authorities, international organisations, and third countries;
5. INVITES the Commission to develop a single comprehensive implementation plan by the end of 2009, in close cooperation with the Member States, in order to achieve these objectives, and to report on the progress to the Council by 2011.

⁴ OJ L 154 of 14.6.2007, p. 25

⁵ 16203/06

⁶ OJ C 171 of 15.06.2001, p. 1

⁷ OJ C 247 of 15.10.2003, p. 1

⁸ Not yet published.